

BEYOND CREDENTIALS

*Enhancing
recruitment by
assessing*

***Transferable
Skills***





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WANTED EMPLOYEES WITH SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE!

If you're looking for new employees, likely these are the kinds of people you're looking for. In these days when major changes are reshaping the work world almost continuously, employers need employees with a broad range of varied skills to make them adaptable, flexible and versatile — capable of keeping up with a changing work world. The problem is how to find them.

Are traditional ways of recruiting and assessing adequate for evaluating these kinds of skills and finding the people who have them? Or has the time come when new ways are needed — ways that assist

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED:

Adaptable, versatile, flexible, highly and broadly skilled. People who are challenged by change, can adjust to a changing workplace, and are willing to learn and relearn as change dictates. Broad range of work, volunteer and life experiences to make those inevitable workplace adjustments more manageable.

both employers and job-seekers to focus on flexibility, versatility, adaptability and transferability. Such a focus will likely, however, mean looking beyond credentials to the skills and knowledge individuals have, regardless of how and where they got them.

Yet, in spite of the fact that today's work world resembles a kaleidoscope, many employers still use formal credentials (diplomas, degrees, certificates, etc.) as the basis for screening applicants into or out of positions. If those are your practices, then this information is for you. Read on.



ADAPTABLE SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE NEW WORK WORLD

The workforce of the future is shaping up to be significantly different from the ones we've become familiar with -- ones in which the baby-boom generation dominated. Now, that bulge is approaching middle-age. In addition, a declining birthrate in the modern, industrialized, western world has resulted in a smaller and dwindling youth sector compared to other sectors of the population. The number of recently educated/trained young people available to enter the work force is much smaller than it used to be.

Futurists foresee a time in the not-too-distant future when **all** available workers — of **all** ages and from **all** backgrounds of training/education — will be needed just to keep up with labour force demands. The pool of available employees that employers will have to choose from will likely include people with broadly varying backgrounds of education, training and experience. Some will have skills that match, others won't. Training and retraining of employees with related or transferable skills will become essential.

Even today, jobs stand idle while workers are unemployed. The mismatch between credentialized skills and labour force demands will likely increase even more dramatically as advanced technologies continue to alter the work world. Employees will have to adapt and be prepared to retrain, while employers will have to see the transferability in people's existing skills, be willing to train and/or retrain employees, and find new and effective ways of assessing transferable skills.

This booklet is designed to help you to see beyond the formal credentials (diplomas, licences, degrees

and certificates) your job applicants and employees may hold, and to evaluate and consider the transferable personal and technical types of skills they have. Recognizing such skills will help you see the potential there is for you to create an adaptable workforce in your own workplace — a workforce that will be capable of adjusting to and handling the changes both you and your employees will face.

Various life and work experiences, like informal, formal and on-the-job training, volunteer experience, and personal life experiences develop broadly-ranging skills which can be applied to many different work situations. Over time these skills become fine-tuned and develop into major strengths as they are carried from job to job and experience to experience. The varied skills that individuals accumulate through their lifetime experiences equip them to do many different jobs/tasks successfully. Given the chance, most people can prove just how capable, versatile and adaptable their own accumulation of transferable skills have made them.

Modern, informed employers, see transferable skills as the keys to coping with the changing work world. They look for employees who are not only technically skilled, but who have basic educational and personal skills they can transfer and adapt to new and different duties. Employees who are challenged by change, are receptive to learning, and relearning, and who are willing to change with a changing work world are becoming valuable commodities. These are the employees who can help you meet the challenges of the future.

So, if assessing transferable skills hasn't played a significant role in your assessment and recruitment so far, maybe it's time to start. You, too, can find employees who can meet your needs for today and on into the future.

FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON

When you're hiring a new employee, what you need and want is the best person for the job. Someone who is both capable and suitable. Someone who will fit into your organization and contribute to its success both now and in the future. Someone you can trust and rely on, and who shares your values and expectations. You want an employee who'll be committed to your organization and who will work toward developing a productive working relationship with you and your other employees.

Of course that's who you want, but the challenge is where to find that individual and how to determine whether or not he/she will be able to measure up to your expectations.

KNOWING WHAT TO FOCUS ON... TECHNICAL SKILLS? KNOWLEDGE? EXPERIENCE? EDUCATION?

If those are your expectations, what can you, the employer, focus on in your recruitment and assessment that will guarantee that you find the "right" employee? Should you stress academic qualifications? References? Work-related experiences? Skills? Training? Personal qualities? That depends. Most likely at different times and with certain jobs you'll be focussing on all, some, or any number of these aspects in combination. The important thing is not to exclude any of them from your assessment, and to see each one as an important and legitimate way of assessing an individual's skills.

Some jobs demand very specialized technical knowledge and skill. In such cases, emphasizing formal academic studies and related training in both recruitment and assessment, and selection would likely be most appropriate. But there are other positions in which the specific technical knowledge required could be learned on the job, so the amount of technical knowledge the applicant brings to the

job may be far less important than his/her ability to organize and handle a heavy workload; to deal with complaints, problems, tight deadlines or difficult customers; to analyze and interpret new data; lift or carry heavy objects; or to manage or teach others. For such positions, whether or not the applicant has a certificate or diploma probably makes little difference to how he/she performs on the job. In these cases, assessing related experiences in which the applicants have had to meet similar challenges, and has had to use similar personal skills, would likely be more effective than stressing credentials.

However, when recruiting for any position, the more aspects of an individual's qualifications you assess — formal studies, skills, attitudes and personal strengths — the more confident you'll feel about getting what you want.

KNOWING WHAT YOU NEED AND WANT!

But *getting* what you want always begins with *knowing* what you want, and how to recognize it. So before you even begin to start looking for the "right" employee, make sure you identify the exact skills — both the technical and the personal — that you want that someone to have to do the job exactly the way you want it done. Once those skills are clear in *your* mind and written down on paper, it will make finding people who have those skills, a much easier task.



But even before you start outlining specific requirements for the job you are recruiting to, there are a number of larger issues you should think about first — issues relating to the relationship between skills and credentials that will influence what you look for and how you recruit.

CREDENTIALS AND SKILLS — SEEING THE RELATIONSHIP

What do you see as the connection between skills and credentials? Are they one and the same, or are they something different?

Usually credentials are seen as proof of specific skill and knowledge achievements. A Journeyman Certificate in Welding. A High School Diploma. A B.Sc. in Nursing. Each of these credentials conveniently provides an employer with ready proof that the holder of those credentials has been exposed to certain skills and knowledge. Credentials can be thought of as "formally packaged" skills and knowledge, representing a specified set of courses, studies or training taken through formal education and that has produced a certificate, diploma, degree or other document providing proof of the individual's achievements.

Uncredentialized skills, in contrast, are those that are developed through other means — on-the-job training, experience, volunteer service, self-teaching, etc. Often they are not supported by any documents as proof of achievement, and holders of these skills have to be able to isolate and identify the particular skills and knowledge they have developed. Only references or work records might be able to attest to these skill achievements.

The ultimate test of an individual's skill achievement, though — the ability to perform the required duties successfully — is not restricted to people with

credentials. Performance, in many cases, does not depend on having documents that represent skills, nor on how or where the holder developed the skills, but rather on actually having the skills required.

We are now part of a global marketplace, affected by rapidly developing technologies, by increased immigration and an aging population, and by industrial shifts and restructuring. In this kind of work world, attitudes toward skills and credentials, their relationship and the value of each, are becoming increasingly important. As immigration increases to offset the reduced youth population, and as many people seek employment in new occupations because their old ones have become outdated and have disappeared, skills that enable employees to adapt quickly to new and evolving duties will inevitably increase in value. Credentials can't tell you that.

As shortages of skilled labour become more intense, employers may not always be able to find people with the credentials they want. They may soon have to assess potential employees, both those with and without credentials, on the basis of whose skills will be most transferable and adaptable. As employers begin to focus on transferable skills, employees, too, will have to learn to isolate, identify and market the skills they have developed from other work experiences that they can apply to new ones. The close relationship between skills and credentials, will likely take on new meaning, and attitudes and practices will adjust accordingly.

ACKNOWLEDGING THERE IS MORE THAN ONE WAY TO DEVELOP SKILLS

To start with, it is important to acknowledge that formal education/training that produces credentials is only one way of becoming skilled. Secondly, it is essential that open attitudes toward the value of transferable skills becomes incorporated in to recruiting and hiring practices. People **can** develop

the same level of skill and capability through a number of different means.

Becoming skilled, regardless of the field, is like travelling. Once you've chosen a destination, your circumstances often determine the means and route you take to get there. Some people travelling to Sydney (Australia) or London (England) may choose to travel direct, taking an airplane, while others may travel by boat, stopping at various ports of call along the way. And although each may travel by a different route and different means, and take different amounts of time to reach the destination, eventually they'll arrive at the same place.

This analogy can apply to the various routes and means by which different people reach their work-related destinations, as well. Some people are where they are, in terms of their qualifications (the skills and knowledge they have acquired) because they took the direct route; studying the field directly at a college, university or technical school. They likely have *credentialized skills*. Others, who have also arrived at the same place in terms of qualifications (the skills and knowledge they have) may have used a totally different means and route — on-the-job training and years of experience, incidental courses, informal training, volunteering, etc. Likely they have no credentials to support their skills and knowledge.

Now when those two applicants apply for the same job with your company — one with credentials related to the job, and the other who has developed the required skills through training on the job and experience — the deciding factor affecting who's considered for the job will be your attitude toward the equivalency between transferable skills and credentials.

VALUING SKILLS WHETHER THEY'RE PACKAGED AS CREDENTIALS OR NOT

So whether you're looking at hiring a musician, a carpenter, a computer operator, or a manager, be prepared to receive applications from many skilled people who have acquired their skills in a variety of ways and who feel qualified for the job. How well you have come to terms with the skills and

credentials issue, will definitely affect how you evaluate the applications you review and the opportunities various applicants get.

But if you feel more comfortable considering candidates with diplomas, licences, degrees, or certificates, you're not alone. Many employers feel that way. Credentials have, for a long time, been the major factor considered in assessing potential employees. Many employers and employees alike, find identifying isolated skills (required or held) difficult, and look instead to "formally packaged skills" or credentials to represent requirements.

But neither employers nor employees will be able to think that way for long. Gone are the days when credentials outlived people's careers. Today, it's not unusual for people to be involved in five or more different occupations within a lifetime. Skills, specific to one occupation, quickly become outdated by new technologies, changing market demands, and shifts in industries. It is difficult for people to keep up with the changes, leave alone having the formal credentials for each. Without a doubt, training and retraining will be essential; credentials may or may not be. Both employers and job-seekers will, now more than ever before, have to be able to analyze the skills needed to do a job and see where transferability can take place.

It's also important, that you, as an employer, feel confident in assessing the skills required for the job and in those offered by the applicants. Remember, when you're recruiting for a job in *your* company/organization, it's *your* own assessment of each applicant's capabilities as they relate to the particular job and the particular workplace (including existing staff, values, management style, attitudes, etc.) that matters most in getting the right person for that job.

Keep in mind that all individuals who apply for specific jobs believe they have sufficient skills and knowledge to allow them to be successful in performing that job. Discovering those links and their receptivity to change and retraining, is what's important for you, and also for them.

Now after thinking about some of the issues concerning skills and credentials, it's time to apply some of those thoughts to the task most affected by them — recruiting. The following exercise may help you see that although credentials have their place in the assessment of certain essential skills, other skills may need to be assessed through other means.

List three skills required in a particular job you're recruiting to that you feel *can be assessed* accurately from the credentials (degrees, licences, diplomas, certificates) the applicant has.

List three skills required in a particular job you're recruiting to that you feel *cannot adequately be assessed* from an evaluation of an applicant's formal educational credentials.

Of those skills that you feel *cannot* be adequately assessed from credentials, how do you plan to assess them in order to determine whether or not the applicants have the necessary skills?

It is apparent that certain types of essential skills (ability to apply knowledge, leadership, perseverance, etc.) can only be determined by evaluating various aspects of the applicant's work history; sometimes by inference, sometimes through references. Sometimes, assessing formal learning is the appropriate means of determining transferable skills, at other times, it could be experience, informal learning, interests, values, or other aspects that can provide answers about a candidate's qualifications. Being open to assessing all skills by every means possible will benefit all.

THE "ARE THE CREDENTIALS ESSENTIAL?" QUIZ

But before you make any assumptions about whether or not you need specific credentials as basic prerequisites for the position you're recruiting to, do the following quiz. Your answers may help you see more clearly whether or not the specific skills the prospective employee needs must be accompanied by specific credentials.

1. What specific credentials (diplomas, degrees, licences, certificates) were you planning to request for this position?

Your answer: _____

Why are you requesting them?

2. Could people without those specific credentials perform the duties required in the job?

Your answer: _____

Why or why not? _____

3. Did the people who filled the position previously have the credentials you are requesting now?

Your answer: _____

Did they use these specific credentials?

Your answer: _____

How (if yes) or why not (if no)?

4. Could the skills required for the job be acquired in ways other than through the formal education or training you have specified?

Your answer: _____

How (if yes) or why not (if no)?

5. Would an individual with appropriate transferable skills be able to acquire the technical skill and knowledge on the job?

Your answer: _____

How (if yes) or why not (if no)?

More and more employers are realizing that the skills individuals have developed through some work activities are valuable to lots of other different work situations. The whole idea of transferability as it relates to skills is catching on. Today, numerous educational institutions in various countries, including Canada¹ and the United States, are evaluating people's educational, work and life experiences and giving them credits equivalent to course credits.

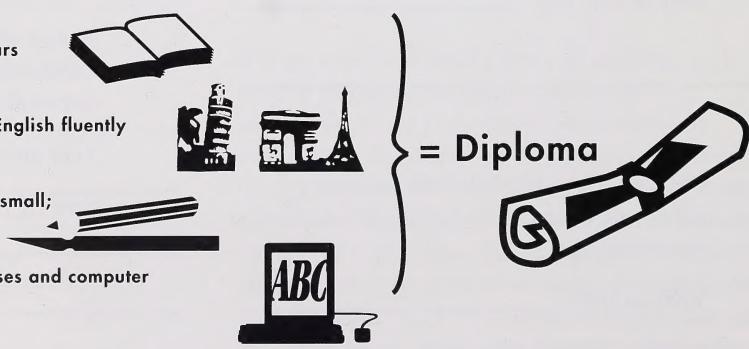
When an individual's "previous learnings" (regardless of how they were acquired) are assessed as current, relevant and appropriate to educational goals, formal learning institutions are translating these uncredentialed skills and experience into credentials. Such practices will, undoubtedly, assist both employers and employees in seeing the equivalency between experience and formal credentialized learning.

But we're not there yet. Transferable skills are still not equal competitors with credentials, especially in initial screening. Many candidates without credentials are still being screened out of competition before the interview — a place where they may have been able to make a case in support of their transferable skills.

But as employers become convinced about the transferability of skills, job seekers, themselves, will have to become more secure, confident and skilled at identifying and marketing the skills they have that can transfer to other positions. Today, many employees find it difficult to isolate the skills they have developed through the jobs they've had. Many still rely on their credentials to speak for their skills, believing that the credential, whether it's in rehabilitation therapy, engineering, teaching, carpentry, or electronics, automatically reveals the full range of skills they have and can use or apply somewhere else. Skills such as researching, organizational, leadership, management, communications, motivational and other such skills are sometimes overlooked, or not recognized as the highly valuable transferable skills they are; essential to most jobs.

Over the next few pages we will look at the three main types of transferable skills — technical, functional and self-management — and how you can use them to your advantage in assessing the applicants who apply to work for you.

- Volunteer tutoring in E.S.L. for 3 years
- Speak Spanish, Italian, French and English fluently
- Worked in lay-out and paste-up for small; weekly newspaper for 8 years
- Studied several graphic design courses and computer graphics at night school



LOOKING AT TECHNICAL SKILLS AND HOW TO ASSESS THEM

Most jobs, to be done well, require the people who do them to have a certain background and level of knowledge and the know-how to perform certain tasks. These specific, often highly-specialized areas of knowledge and/or skill are referred to as *technical skills*.

Knowing how to operate a forklift, a computer, an airplane, a television camera and a scalpel are all technical skills. Knowing the geological structures of the earth that are associated with the presence of petroleum is essential technical information in one field of work; while knowing what a "micrometre" is, and understanding its purpose in reproducing machine parts is essential technical knowledge in another field.

While some technical knowledge and/or skills can be acquired only through very specific training and/or education, others can be learned on the job, through volunteering, or various other life/work experiences. Formal credentials provide information about standard areas of technical knowledge and skill the holders have acquired through formal education or training. They indicate that those individuals have been exposed to in-depth information in specific subject areas.

Many people have technical skills and knowledge they have developed through sources other than formal education or training. The volunteer who has worked for many years with children with handicaps, has likely acquired a great deal of technical skill and knowledge concerning handling, relating to, and teaching children with disabilities; although he/she may have no formal credentials.

The technical skills listed on the right are just a few of thousands of technical skills people use everyday in their jobs.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

USE SCISSORS TO CUT HAIR



PLACE CLIP-ART GRAPHICS IN A PAGEMAKER FILE



GROW VEGETABLES ORGANICALLY



USE AN EXTRUDER TO MAKE LOAVES OF BREAD



USE EXTRAPOLATIONS TO MAKE STATISTICAL PROJECTIONS



USE CAD TO CREATE DRAWING OF PROPOSED STRUCTURES



ASSESSING TECHNICAL SKILLS

As you attempt to assess the transferability of the technical skills the applicants present, you will be trying to decide how many of the technical skills and how much of the technical knowledge — the specific kinds of tools, equipment, information, and the processes and procedures — the applicant has used before, will be useful in the particular job he/she is applying for.

To determine how much of their technical skill and knowledge can transfer, you will first need to identify the technical skills required for the job and then compare them to what the applicant has done previously. Start by writing out specific action phrases that outline those duties of the job that require specific technical knowledge and/or skills.

For example, if you are recruiting a bricklayer, your list of technical skill requirements may include the following:

- interpret drawings and blueprints
- calculate required quantities of materials
- lay various types of structural blocks including bricks, stone, and concrete blocks
- construct and/or repair various structures including walls, fireplaces, arches, chimneys, and
- calculate cost estimates for various projects

If you are recruiting an individual to work with delinquent adolescents in a group home, your list of technical requirements might read like this:

- understand child/adolescent development
- know about behavioural disorders and their manifestations
- apply successful methods of dealing with behavioral difficulties in adolescents
- understand various areas of adolescent concerns and ways of addressing them

You may find that for some positions, the technical skills and knowledge required to do the job can be learned once on the job, and the importance of stressing technical skills may not be as essential to getting the right person as focussing on appropriate functional and self-management skills.

OUTLINING SPECIFIC TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE JOB

In the spaces below, outline those specific technical skills required for a certain job you are recruiting to, keeping in mind the examples just given.

_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

Now try to decide whether or not credentials are essential, or if you'd be willing to hire an applicant who has related technical skills and knowledge which you believe would enable him/her to do the job.

For example, if you were doing this exercise for the earlier example relating to the group home worker, you could decide that only those applicants with a Social Services Worker Diploma from a college or a Social Sciences Degree from a university, would have the appropriate background knowledge and skills required to do the job. Then you'd likely interview only those individuals who presented those specific credentials. If on the other hand, you acknowledge that skills are transferable and can be

successfully applied to a wide variety of different duties/positions, you might be interested in an application from a junior high school teacher with eight years of experience who is looking for a career change; or the one from an individual, with no formal training, but with eleven years of experience in a similar setting in another province; or from the individual who has done volunteer work in a juvenile delinquent detention centre for 15 years, and has raised three teenagers of her own.

So now go back to the previous exercise, and evaluate the “essential credential” nature of the job you’re recruiting to. In the small boxes behind the required technical skills, place one of the following letters

i) “C”, for *credentials*, if you feel that only formal credentials (apprenticeship, college certificate, diploma, or university degree) could equip the applicant with the specific technical skills required for the job, or

ii) “TS”, for *transferable skills*, if you feel that related training and experience and/or informal training (including on-the-job training, seminars, other related work or volunteer experience, etc.) could equip the applicant with the skills needed to do the job.

BRINGING SKILLS TO THE JOB... OR LEARNING THEM ON THE JOB

When you’re considering the technical skill requirements of a job, keep in mind that while some skills are absolutely basic and must be **brought** to the job, many of these skills and much of the information required, can be **learned** while on the job. If a candidate meets the general requirements of the job through related education, training, and/or experience; seems suitable; and has a receptive and enthusiastic attitude, likely he/she can acquire much of the required technical skill and knowledge once he/she is working in the job.

List those specific technical skills you feel are absolutely essential for the employee to *bring* to this job.

List the technical skills and knowledge you feel that a suitably-qualified candidate, who lacked some technical knowledge, could *learn* on the job later.

RECOGNIZING TECHNICAL SKILLS IN ACTION

APPLY SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES TO RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

USE QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

MEASURE MINUTE QUANTITIES OF SUBSTANCES

USE FLUOROSCOPE TO DETERMINE THE EFFECTS OF X-RAYS ON VARIOUS SUBSTANCES

USE AN ELECTRON MICROSCOPE TO ANALYZE CULTURES



LOOKING AT FUNCTIONAL SKILLS AND HOW TO ASSESS THEM

Most people develop certain skills to help them function in the day-to-day, routine (and sometimes not-so-routine) tasks they are responsible for. Some handle their workloads at work, at home, or in the community by being *well organized*, while others *delegate*. Still others increase their abilities to function by developing skills in *communicating*, *analyzing*, *leading* or *facilitating* others. Such skills are known as *functional skills*.

These skills develop over time and through experience in a wide variety of activities. Being involved in such activities as volunteering, studying, homemaking, recreational and community activities, paid work, travelling, parenting and hobbies all provide opportunities for learning and developing these valuable transferable skills.

Most functional skills are highly valued in the workplace. Since not everyone has had the same work/life experiences and since these skills develop from doing particular kinds of tasks in those experiences, not everyone has the same ones nor are they developed to the same degree in all people. But those who have them, carry them from job to job, and apply them to whatever tasks they undertake. An organized individual is likely to be organized in whatever task he/she does; whether involved as a volunteer organizing community events, as a homemaker organizing household routines, or as a courier dispatcher organizing the work of the drivers.

These skills are highly valued because they are difficult to develop in employees who do not already have them. While *technical skills* and much of the *technical knowledge* required for a job can be learned relatively easily on the job, *functional skills* cannot.

In most jobs, *communication*, *organizational*, and *problem-solving* skills are desired, even if they are not specifically required. Although there are hundreds and hundreds of different functional skills that people have, those listed on the right are some that have been identified by employers as being most valued in the workplace.

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

ANALYTICAL SKILLS

COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS

CREATIVE SKILLS

DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

LEADERSHIP SKILLS

ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

PEOPLE SKILLS

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

CONSULTING SKILLS

**SOCIAL SKILLS (WORKING
WELL WITH OTHERS)**

ASSESSING FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

Assessing transferable functional skills means looking at the various functions individuals may have fulfilled in their different jobs, volunteer, or life experiences, and determining which of those functions will be required or useful in the job they are applying for.

For example, a person working in public relations, among other things, *communicates* (both verbally and in written form), *researches, advises, and coordinates* a variety of events and activities. A school teacher, whose primary function is teaching, also *communicates* verbally and in writing, *researches, advises and coordinates* numerous activities in the process of teaching.

As you can see some of the same functions are common to both of these jobs. That would indicate that there is a fair degree of transferability between these jobs, and that it may be possible for experienced teachers, who highlight these skills in their resumes, to be considered for jobs in public relations. Unfortunately transferability from public relations to teaching is not as clear-cut. The essential technical skills and knowledge required to teach children would likely prevent someone with a public relations background from assuming a teaching position unless he/she had further specific teacher training.

Once you start analyzing job functions, you will find that many of the same basic functions are both used and required over and over again in different jobs. So if specific content and technical information can be learned on the job, there should be many different jobs individuals could do successfully if they had the basic and appropriate functional skills required.

IDENTIFYING FUNCTIONAL SKILLS NEEDED TO DO THE JOB

In the spaces below list the functions/duties/activities the person will perform in the job your recruiting for. What activities describe his or her responsibilities?

IDENTIFYING THE FUNCTIONAL SKILLS APPLICANTS HAVE

Although identifying the functional skills required to do the job many be quite simple, identifying the functional skills a potential employee has that could be transferred over, may not be.

Functional skills are not reflected by job titles or by educational credentials. It's only when you analyze the actual duties individuals have performed in various related experiences that the functional skills they have developed become apparent. That is why many job-seekers, without formal credentials, find functional resumes so useful. There they can focus on the functional skills they have developed through their past experiences and relate them to the requirements of the jobs they are applying for. But applicants, like employers, often fail to recognize and communicate the value and importance of their own functional transferable skills.

And although employers may sometimes fail to recognize the value of the functional skills job applicants have to offer, rarely do they fail to acknowledge the significant roles these skills play in successful adjustment to and performance on the job.

FUNCTIONAL SKILLS IN ACTION

FORMULATING

OBSERVING

MAKING DECISIONS
EVALUATING

MEASURING

TESTING

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

ANALYZING



LOOKING AT SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND HOW TO ASSESS THEM

As we mature and our responsibilities increase, we develop our own individual ways of managing ourselves that help us deal with the tasks we have to perform and the responsibilities we have. For example, some people are *efficient*, in their actions as well as their words. Others take *initiative*, are *well-prepared, flexible, reliable, enthusiastic, determined, loyal, punctual* and/or are *go-getters*. Most people have many of these skills. When combined, they make up the operating systems people rely on to handle their responsibilities.

You likely know people who approach life and all the tasks they are required to carry out with enthusiasm, a positive attitude, pride and a willingness to do whatever has to be done. Others deal with life and their tasks with the opposite approach — complaining, negative, resentful, bored or overburdened. Those individual attitudes and approaches to managing one's own self are very important to how employees relate to their co-workers and employers, and to how they do their jobs.

Such approaches and tactics are referred to as *self-management skills*. But since they are part of a person's personality (their attitudes and their personal tendencies) they are difficult to develop in a person who doesn't already have them.

Employers who realize the amount of effort required to deal with an employee who is dependable, cooperative, responsible, well-prepared, confident and has tact, and one who is not, will also realize why assessing potential employees to discover those who have good self-management skills is essential. Because such skills are useful and highly valued in all work environments, they are considered highly transferable from one job to another. A dependable, enthusiastic truck driver will likely be a dependable, enthusiastic warehouse worker, or salesperson, if he/she decides to become one.

The self-management skills listed on the right are ones that employers have identified as being particularly desirable in the workplace.

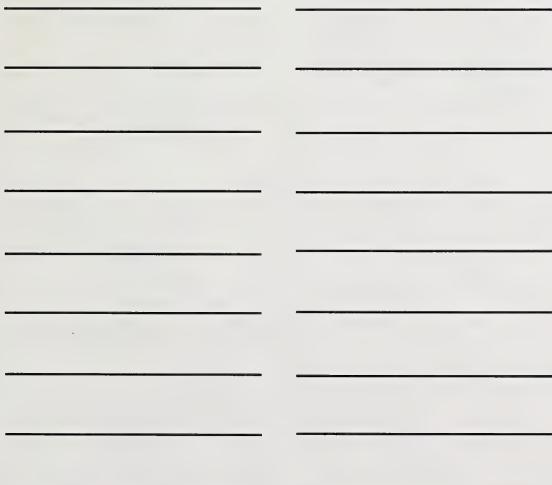


RECOGNIZING THE SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS YOU VALUE IN THE EMPLOYEES YOU ALREADY HAVE

What is it about the particular employees you have, or have had, that make/made them so well-suited to their jobs? Positive attitude? Sensitivity? Dependability? Enthusiasm? Cooperativeness? Level of Concern? Diligence? Intuitiveness? Determination? Commitment?

Are there specific personal skills you feel certain employees lack that make it difficult for them to do their jobs well? Knowing these things about the employees you already have and those who filled the position before, will probably help you identify the self-management skills you feel are important for the position you are recruiting to.

Think of the particular personal strengths and special personal qualities possessed by individual employees you have or have had that make/made them suitable for and successful in their jobs. List them in the spaces below.



IDENTIFYING THE SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE JOB

Now consider the duties of the job and the kinds of personal management skills that would assist someone in doing that job well. List the self-management skills you feel are particularly important for the position you are recruiting to, keeping in mind the specific duties, responsibilities, and nature of the job. You may wish to refer back to the previous page for examples of common highly-valued self-management skills.

RECOGNIZING SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS IN ACTION

OBSERVANT

EXACTING

ENQUIRIES

INQUISITIV

DEDICATED

DETERM

PRECISE



On the following two pages you will find the profiles of two individuals — Dan and Jennifer — along with brief descriptions of some of their work-related experiences. Each of those experiences is analyzed in terms of the tasks involved and the skills used. You may wish to refer to these examples as guides in your skills analysis of the job you're recruiting to.

Dan is a journeyman electrician who, as a foreman on his last job, travelled throughout Alberta to oversee numerous projects. Each one was successfully completed within budget. Dan's sharp wit and ability to get along with others was admired by his co-workers and boss. Dan was responsible for submitting quotes, setting up a site, organizing duties, controlling quality, and completing a job on schedule. He has been unemployed for the last three months and would like to prepare a resume that would increase his chances of being interviewed.

Dan is married and has three children. During the past year, as the result of questions his daughter asked about the family history, Dan became

PAID EMPLOYMENT AS AN ELECTRICAL FOREMAN

Tasks/Activities Involved

Supervising/overseeing the work of other electricians. explaining

Skills Used

making decisions
directing/supervising
initiating
confronting
tact
understanding

Submitting quotes

calculating
measuring
estimating
numerical reasoning
writing

Setting up a worksite

directing/supervising
planning
organizing

Organizing duty assignments

making decisions
planning
organizing
analyzing

Ensuring quality control

being precise
alertness
attention to detail
verifying integrity

Ensuring that each job stays on schedule (deadlines are met)

directing/supervising
efficiency
dependability
persistence
working under pressure

interested in genealogy. Now his goal is to develop a family tree. So far, Dan has interviewed his grandparents and some other older relatives, obtained copies of birth and death records from Bureaus of Statistics in Ontario and Alberta, and contacted distant relatives in Europe. Running into a number of dead ends in his research has not discouraged Dan. In fact, he's more determined than ever to complete work on his family tree. In the last few months, Dan has also been involved in refereeing baseball for the little league.

The following is a description of some of the tasks/activities involved in two of Dan's accomplishments.

WORKING ON A FAMILY TREE

Tasks/Activities Involved

Planning and organizing tasks to be done.

Skills Used

planning
organizing
enthusiasm
pride in performance

Interviewing relatives

questioning
investigating/
researching

Researching sources of info: family records, archives, etc.

attention to detail
reading
writing
investigating
researching
perseverance

Analyzing and organizing the information obtained

record keeping
sorting
writing
organizing
analyzing

After she finished high school, Jennifer worked as a cashier at a large supermarket. Everyday she greeted customers, rang in grocery amounts on her cash register, took the customers' payments and made change. She had to be familiar with all the prices and the items on special. She often had to handle coupons and refunds. It was important for her to balance at the end of her shift when she cashed out. At busy times, Jennifer often had to pack groceries as well as run the inventory checks. No matter what kind of day it was, she was always courteous to the customers. Jennifer's pleasant manner and enthusiasm had a positive effect on the attitudes of her fellow workers and her customers.

Jennifer left her job at the supermarket when her first child was born. She is now working at home as a

fulltime homemaker and mother of two children. In addition to the work she does in her home caring for her children, cleaning, handling the family budget, doing minor home repairs, preparing meals and doing laundry. Jennifer is also actively involved with the local community. She is currently the treasurer of the community league. Jennifer recently finished redecorating her home and is now refinishing a dresser in her spare time.

In the fall when her youngest child starts primary school, Jennifer would like to re-enter the paid workforce. However, she's not that sure she wants to work as a cashier again.

The following is a description of some of the tasks/activities involved in two of Jennifer's accomplishments.

PAID EMPLOYMENT AS A CASHIER

Tasks/Activities Involved	Skills Used
Greeting, assisting and being courteous to customers.	communicating explaining, remembering, tact, flexibility, enthusiasm, self control
Operating a computerized cash register	manual dexterity calculating
Taking payments and making change	manual dexterity attention to detail following procedures calculating
Packing merchandise	manual dexterity sorting
Doing inventory	sorting, counting record keeping
Cashing out (balancing monies) at the end of the day.	being accurate following procedures calculating integrity

WORKING AS A HOMEMAKER

Tasks/Activities Involved	Skills Used
Setting up and managing the family budget.	record keeping calculating estimating, planning investigating researching
Planning and preparing meals	planning following procedures improvising experimenting, adapting
Doing routine cleaning and laundry	sorting/organizing persistence performing repetitive tasks
Planning family activities	negotiating planning/organizing
General home maintenance	manual dexterity designing, building operating, adjusting fixing/repairing mechanical reasoning
Parenting	communicating negotiating teaching counselling caring

Hopefully, the information you've just read has given you a clearer understanding of the different types of transferable skills and how to assess each when recruiting, evaluating and selecting new employees. In addition, some of the other issues raised may have given you an opportunity to consider jobs, skills, credentials and the employee from a different perspective — a skill perspective.

New work world realities are making new perspectives on these issues necessary. Changes in the workplace and in job duties are affecting both the employee and employer in major ways. But it is not only the work environment that is changing. New developments are affecting workers as well.

Changes in the workworld are offering people a whole new range of exciting and enticing work options. As a result, people's attitudes, perceptions, outlooks and values are shifting. And when that happens, people often change jobs, look in new directions and develop new areas of interest. They grow, and expand their range of skills, knowledge and capabilities. Sometimes people completely abandon their old areas of work for entirely new interests. And when they do, sometimes their backgrounds of training, education and experience end up being only remotely related, and maybe even totally unrelated, to the work they do or find themselves wanting to do. Does that mean that their prior training, experience, education and credentials stand for nothing now? Is retraining totally the only way to become skilled again? Absolutely not!

Learning, regardless of how or when it is acquired, is valuable. Technical knowledge and skill may become redundant or outdated, but the other essential skills an individual has only need a new environment in which to be applied. Knowledge and skills are never lost; they only accumulate.

Learning, whether formal or informal, and from all life experiences, whether paid work or volunteer experience, must be valued. Learning from all

sources contributes equally to the development of the storehouse of knowledge and skills that people can draw from and use whenever they are needed.

REMEMBER... IT'S PERSONAL SKILLS THAT KEEP PEOPLE IN THEIR JOBS

Research indicates that people who have been hired into particular positions, are rarely let go from those positions because they lack the *technical* know-how required to do the job. Usually people are fired because they lack the appropriate personal skills required to fit in, work with others and contribute to the organization. Since credentials bear witness primarily to technical skill and knowledge development, it makes sense to assess those essential functional and self-management skills that are associated with the successful maintenance of a job, and a winning match between employee, job and organization.

MEETING THE DEMAND FOR SKILLS IN THE FUTURE

The amount of technical skill and knowledge needed to function in the current workplace is increasing; that's a given. And as we move deeper into the technological and information age, many new technical skills will continue to be demanded of the job-seeker. That may or may not mean more credentials.

Undoubtedly, the demand for higher levels of basic functioning, particularly in literacy and numeracy skill areas, is increasing. Routinely now, employers ask for high school diplomas, and/or some form of post-secondary training as a minimum prerequisite for many jobs.

The important issue here is not whether skill levels are rising, that is understood. The question that arises concerns whether the current increasing demand for credentials is really an increased desire for skills, and whether employers are willing and able to

recognize the skills they require when those skills are not formally packaged in credentials.

It appears that the time is rapidly approaching when all avenues of learning — training on the job, volunteer experience, other paid employment, various life experiences such as travelling, parenting and homemaking, as well as formal education/training — will have to be recognized as legitimate and valuable ways of acquiring or developing useful skills that can be applied in the workforce. The time for crediting the source, whatever that is, seems to be at hand.

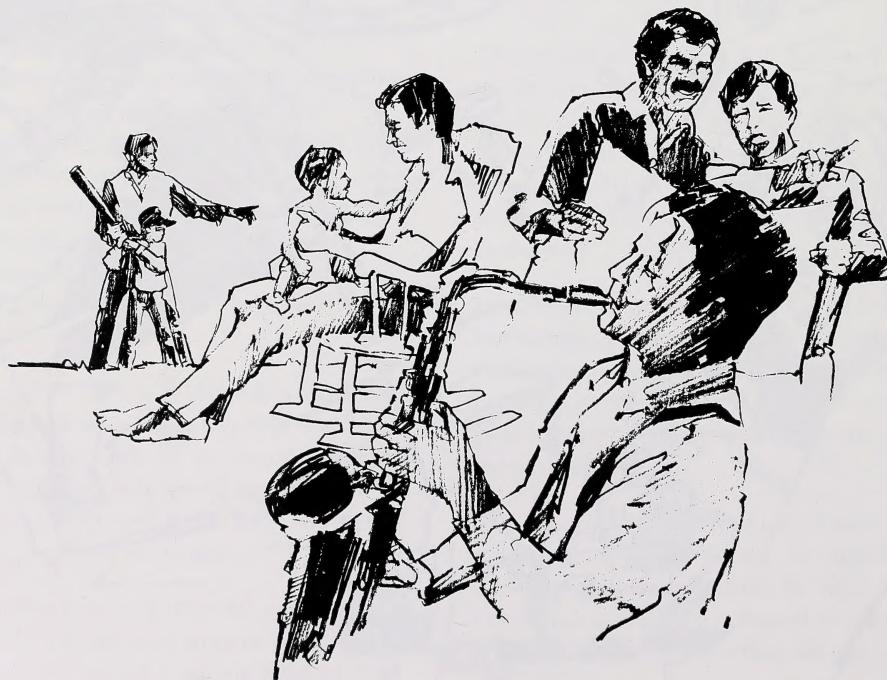


As an employer you have contact with large numbers of employees. You are probably well aware of the enormous number of sources, in addition to work experience, that supply people's storehouse of skills and knowledge that help them do the work they do. Most people have developed skills through their outside interests, community involvement, family and personal responsibilities, and other life experiences, including such activities as travelling and volunteering. They draw on their learnings from all these activities to do their work. When you consider the accumulated amount of talent, skill and ability that a group of individuals making up a staff in a workplace has, the range of expertise may be staggering.

Learning to recognize and appreciate the unique and multiple talents, skills and potential contributions of each of your employees and to value the unique set of personal skills and values each has, may be one of your most important tasks as an employer. Tapping

that vast reservoir can open doors to resources and talents you never dreamed you had at your disposal. For example, it's important to see beyond the clerical skills that your clerical staff have, and beyond the computer skills your computer systems people have, to the broader and more varied skills, abilities, talents and ideas they each have. Neither job titles nor formal credentials can ever reflect the multi-skilled person inside the employee well enough to give you a look at the full range of inner skills and talents your employees or applicants have.

In today's world, transferable skills are increasing in importance. Attitudes toward formal education and the credentials they produce are broadening and allowing for the recognition and acknowledgement of experience as the great teacher that it is. To keep pace with the times and changing realities, the time has come for the whole employee and the total accumulation of his/her learning to be considered and valued. We'll all benefit. The time to start is today.



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CAREER DEVELOPMENT
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